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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000933

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SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE WITH GOM CONTINUES

REF: A. RABAT 00256

[1](#)B. RABAT 00858

Classified By: A/Political Counselor Ian McCary, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
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[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officials and the Embassy reached agreement on a new formula for regular human rights consultations that will include a mechanism for raising specific cases with the Government of Morocco (GOM). In a wide-ranging discussion, the MFA complained to us that the human rights report was a "political" document that did not go far enough in recognizing Morocco's progress on political reform. They also complained that the Western Sahara report was slanted toward Algeria and that Algeria's human rights report was unduly positive when compared to Morocco's. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff met with Nasser Bourita, Director of the United Nations and International Organizations section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Abdelmounaim El Farouq, Chief of the Division for Humanitarian and Social Questions, on May 25 to discuss the 2006 human rights reports on Morocco and the Western Sahara. This meeting identified the next steps in the human rights dialogue with the Government of Morocco (GOM). The Morocco report was "balanced," according to Bourita; however, he complained that the Western Sahara report is slanted toward Algeria and the Polisario. Bourita questioned some of the Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor's (DRL) criteria and recommended specific changes.

The Reports are Political

[1](#)3. (C) The human rights reports are political, according to Bourita, and "you will never convince anyone it's (they are) not political." The reports have an impact on regional and internal politics, Bourita said, and they may create unnecessary problems. Problems are definitely created, he asserted, by having a separate Western Sahara report -- "there should not be two separate reports." For Bourita, the Western Sahara report focuses on "exceptions and not the rule," favors the Polisario, and gives credence to the identification of the people who live in the Western Sahara as a separate political group, i.e., the Sahrawis. Furthermore, he added, "the Western Sahara report discusses the Tindouf (Algeria) camps and prisoners of war (POW)." The former should be discussed in the Algeria report, Bourita said, and, the POW issue is "solved."

[1](#)4. (C) Bourita was pleased with what he identified as the

"balance in the Morocco report," e.g., that the GOM was named in several places as a source of information. At the same time, however, he said that the report's introduction is "unfair" as it implies that monarchy as a political system is negative. Algeria, according to Bourita, "looks better" than Morocco in the human rights reports and he flatly rejected identifying Algeria as a "positive example" of democracy. Bourita argued that Morocco is in a "period of transition" and expressed his concern that the introduction does not give Morocco enough credit for the progress it has made. The reports, he said, "should be in line with other things (more positive statements from the USG) from the whole year" and not be contradictory.

Next Steps

15. (C) Bourita supported regularization of a sustained working-level dialogue between the MFA and the Embassy, and he assigned El Farouq to be the MFA human rights point of contact. He requested a weekly meeting between the human rights officer and El Farouq, and a monthly meeting in which he would participate. In order to ensure that the GOM's data on human rights cases is incorporated into the reports, Bourita said that El Farouq will accept memorandums on specific cases or incidents. The MFA will consult with the appropriate GOM ministries and reply; and, all formal responses to UN inquiries will be forwarded to the human rights officer as well. For Bourita, the completed joint process for the 2006 reports pointed out "the virtue of dialogue" (ref A).

16. (C) Bourita expressed concern about the "three-year

RABAT 00000933 002 OF 002

rule." His argument was that the rule should not be applied in every case, and, when possible eliminated. He stated firmly that on the one hand US policy supports emerging democracies, but, on the other hand, the human rights reports chastise these same democracies for being in transition. Bourita thought that support for the progress made would be more constructive than dwelling on incidents which occurred three years ago. In conjunction with this argument, Bourita opined that the report format should be shortened. There is no reason, according to Bourita, to repeat any information contained in other reports, e.g., the International Religious Freedom (IRF) report and the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. All of the reports, he said, should "stand on their own" and can simply be cross-referenced. Both El Farouq and Bourita recommended the shorter style of the IRF report as a model for the human rights reports.

Comment

16. (C) Although Bourita was clearly pleased that the dialogue (ref A) had produced a "balanced" Morocco report, he was less pleased by the Western Sahara report. He believed that the Polisario is orchestrating the recent demonstrations in the universities (ref B) out of concern that the international community will back the Moroccan autonomy proposal for the territory. We believe a continuing dialogue with the MFA is useful, particularly now that a formal process for discussing specific cases has been suggested. The MFA's willingness to coordinate data and information from other GOM ministries should prove helpful. Bourita's serious suggestions for streamlining the annual reports were well-made and need to be considered.

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